

# THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

*pro bono humani generis*

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Joshua Lederberg  
UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

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Mr. Jerry Dirvin  
Procter & Gamble

Dear Jerry --

I was interested to note, at Bastogne, what a well-informed buff you were on WW-2 history!

Polly told me you had a keen interest on how the bestiality of Nazism could have happened. I too have had a keen interest in that; I'm not sure that I come up with much better than an Augustinian view of human nature, that only well crafted social and moral institutions can soften its darkest side.

The literature on this is not very satisfactory. Karl Jaspers (1947) "The Question of German Guilt" may be the most we'll ever get from any who lived through Nazi Germany. Hannah Arendt's "The Origins of Totalitarianism", and Fromm's "Flight from Freedom" are reflections from disparate professional perspectives.

Let me correct a reference I gave Polly. It is:

Peter Hoffmann, History of the German Resistance 1933-45 (1977)

Anthony Cave-Brown's "Bodyguard of Lies" gives some further vignettes on that story. As I told Polly, I've been exercised for almost 50 years about FDR's "Unconditional Surrender" rhetoric, when we might have been able to encourage an internal coup against Hitler. FDR may have been captivated by his own theory of "national character" and so unable to credit that there might be Germans worthy of trust.

See you next month,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

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